



SPEECH

**His Excellency Mr Dharambeer Gokhool G.C.S.K.,
President of the Republic of Mauritius**

**EVENT: LAUNCH OF COMMONWEALTH STUDENTS AND
YOUTH WELFARE GROUP**

VENUE: MUNICIPAL TOWN HALL, PORT LOUIS

DATE: 21 APRIL 2026

TIME: 10:00 HOURS

Protocol

Honourable Shakeel Mohamed, Minister of Housing and Lands

Honourable Kugan Parapen, Junior Minister of Social Integration,
Social Security and National Solidarity

Former Vice President, Mr Raouf Bundhun,

Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Members of the National Assembly

The Lord Mayor, Mr. Aslam Hosenally

Mr Hari Om Dahiya; President & Youth Chair - Commonwealth
Students' Welfare Group of India

Mr Yaaseen Edo, President, and all members of the Commonwealth
Students' and Youth Welfare Group

Distinguished Guests,

All Protocol Observed

Introduction

Good morning, and thank you for your invitation and for the opportunity to address you.

At the outset, I would like to join myself with previous speakers, to commend and congratulate Mr. Mohammad Yaaseen Edo and his collaborators for the establishment of the Commonwealth Students' and Youth Welfare Group.

Indeed a highly commendable initiative.

I have known Mr. Edo for quite some time. In my previous exchanges with Mr. Edo-, including a meeting at State House, we have reflected deeply on the imperative of advancing inclusion and empowering persons with disabilities.

I am happy to learn that this new non-profit organisation brings together a committed executive of seven members, spanning generations and professional backgrounds, working on a voluntary basis alongside a wider body of young people.

Mission

This intergenerational civic engagement is resonates profoundly with the ethos of an inclusive society we aim to build.

The mission of the CSYWG - to promote the values of the modern Commonwealth and to foster intellectual exchange, cultural expression, and civic participation in our vibrant, rainbow nation - is both timely and necessary.

I have no doubt that your work in youth empowerment, disability advocacy, and community development will yield meaningful and lasting impact.

Mr Edoo's Life Trajectory

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have listened attentively to the thoughtful remarks made by previous speakers, and I wish to offer a few reflections of my own.

The lived experiences of Mr. Edoo offer a compelling reflection on resilience, self- confidence,agency, and the transformative power of recognition.

Born with a physical disability and initially excluded from conventional educational pathways, his intellectual curiosity and determination might well have remained unseen - were it not for the discernment of a teacher, Mr. Rishi Bundoo, and the support of Mr. Ajay Thacoor, who recognised his potential and acted upon it.

From that moment emerged a journey marked by academic achievement, civic engagement, and international advocacy, culminating in distinctions such as the Queen's Young Leader Award in 2015.

This narrative invites a broader reflection: societies advance not merely through the accumulation or the allocation of resources, but through their capacity to identify, empathize, nurture, and elevate human potential in all its forms.

Personal Parallel

Allow me to share a personal experience.

I was born in the village of Plaine des Roches and had to walk to the government primary school in Roches Noires.

It was my Headmaster, Mr. Abdool Raman Kassenally, who, perceiving something in me, encouraged my mother to allow me to pursue further studies.

That moment altered the course of my life - and the rest is history.

The parallel I seek to make is clear: while potential may be universal, transforming that potential into realisation depends upon a divine intervention often disguised in human form.

Both Mr Edoo and myself are most grateful to our benefactors.

The responsibility for a just society lies with each one of us- in our ability to transform our individual responsibility into a civic engagement, in particular towards those in greater need.

Mr. Edoo's distinction as a Queen's Young Leader among others, alongside three other Mauritian recipients, underscores the capacity of our youth to act as agents of change within their communities and beyond.

This Award, which ran until 2019, recognised exceptional young individuals across the Commonwealth.

This year, a renewed initiative by the Queen Elizabeth II Commonwealth Trust seeks once again to identify and elevate 100 inspirational young leaders across critical sectors.

Against this backdrop, I extend my appreciation to the British High Commission in Mauritius for its continued support towards initiatives that foster leadership, dialogue, and shared values within the Commonwealth framework. In January this year we celebrated yet another project at State House- 60 years of The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award – which upholds similar values.

Reflections on Inclusion and Nation-Building

Upon assuming office on 7 December 2024, I articulated my commitment to serve as a People's President and President of proximity- one who listens, engages, and remains connected to the lived realities of our citizens so essential in my presidential mission of nation building.

State House has welcomed thousands of visitors, including children, students, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.

Within this broader mission of nation building, disability inclusion, advocacy, and youth empowerment occupy a central place.

The Government Programme 2025 -2029, which I presented to the nation in January, already recognises the necessity of positioning young people as active partners in national development, while strengthening inclusion frameworks.

Yet, public policy on paper alone is insufficient.

It is in this spirit that, in July 2025, I convened a Round Table on Disability Inclusion and Empowerment at State House, bringing

together the United Nations, the National Human Rights Commission, civil society, and government institutions.

This initiative has contributed to more coordinated national action, including the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee chaired by the Hon. Ashok Subron, Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity.

Organisations such as the Commonwealth Students' and Youth Welfare Group have a critical role to play - in shaping narratives, informing policy, and translating principles into practice, in line with the core values of the Commonwealth Charter:

Democracy, human rights, the rule of law, good governance, freedom of expression, respect for diversity, and a shared commitment to sustainable and inclusive societies.

As Head of State and Guardian of our Constitution, I shall remain attentive to your work, and you may count on my support for all initiatives that advance these objectives.

Conclusion

Together, let us forge a Republic that is more inclusive, more equitable, and more attuned to the aspirations of its people - **As One people, as One nation.**

I congratulate you once again and wish you success.

Thank you for your attention.